

Selectmen's minutes of meeting March 9, 2015

Members present: Patrick Barrett, Jeffrey Gray, Lisa Blackmer, Steve Harasyko, Dolores Harasyko

Called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Patrick opened the meeting acknowledging the loss of Joe Zeller. Joe was such an asset to the town. He worked on the highway department, Constable and Fire Department. Joe was always willing to help where ever and when ever needed. The Selectmen extend their condolences on behalf of the town.

Police Chief Michael Morrison in to present Adams Gonska as a new hire as a special police officer for the town. He is fully qualified to the job. Adam brings a lot to the job and is also an EMT. He currently works for the towns of Monterey and Becket. He will work for Sandisfield based on an average of 20 hours a week. The Selectmen thanked Michael and welcomed Adam.

Motion by Patrick, second by Jeff to appoint Adam Gonska as a special police officer. Dolores Harasyko, Town Clerk swore Adam into office.

Police Chief Mike Morrison addressed the details of the police department budget. He explained that speeding tickets are not for profit but that they are a disciplinary tool. The town receives a quarter of the cost of the speeding ticket.

The finance committee are fine with the police department budget.

Steve provided highway department updates. They continue to do pot hole patching. He has estimates for repairing the 2000 International. The frame cracked but can be welded. Kathy Jacobs asked what the highway fleet consists of.

Steve responded 1998 International, 2000 International, 2007 International, 2011 International, 2010 Ford F350 and 2011 Dodge 3500. Steve explained that they maintain the vehicles regularly. They do oil and filter changes every 3,500 miles, do vehicle inspections and tire rotations. Discussed the washing of the vehicles. The Storm Water Prevention Act limits the amount of washing of vehicles because the dirt, oil and slat run into a storm drain which flows into the river. However, they do rinse the vehicles as often as possible. Discussed the 2000 International. The frame has cracked. Steve has acquired two quotes. A short term fix may get up through the summer at a cost of \$4,800. The long term fix which should get us through next winter is \$8,400. Steve reviewed all of the repairs that have been necessary this winter. Terri Ignace complained about the transfer station, Steve has reviewed with all highway department employees. Terri asked about keeping a spot on Route 183 cleared for the school busses. Steve has taken care of this.

Kathy Jacobs asked if there will be any programs in place for incentives or cell phone use policies. Steve is consistently looking into refresher classes and when appropriate has signed up the highway dept. John Burrows asked about the short term fix for the 2000

International compared to the long term. This vehicle has a new engine. Steve plans on taking the clutch and transmission from the 1998 and install them in the 2000.

Lisa clarified that many towns have experienced the same wear and tear on their vehicles from this extremely difficult winter. Jeff is leaning towards a long term fix, Patrick agrees. Jean asked about placing salt and sand around town in different locations to avoid overloading the trucks. Steve explained that we cannot stage the material throughout town unless we have sheds to cover the materials and a loader at each location to load the materials. Jeff explained that this is why the new truck will be a larger truck that will cover the farthest end of town. Patrick warned about discussing employees during an open meeting, this is illegal unless the employee has been notified.

The Selectmen agreed to do the long term fix. Reviewed funding options for the snow and ice overage. Treasurer Teresa DellaGiustina explained that the assessors are meeting this week and will look into the availability of the overlay account.

Teresa asked the finance committee for their opinion regarding fixing the truck. David Hubbard feels we should put off any discussion until we install a monitoring system and make it through the next month without repaired vehicles. He would like to have a rotation schedule. David and Kathy J. discussed the bond rating. John explained the stabilization was created for emergencies and capitol expenditures. John feels the emergencies are appropriate use for the stabilization account. John would not like to see the dpw operate without 2 trucks. Jeff is not in favor of raising taxes. Lisa explained that the town losses \$148,000 a year from chapter 61 programs. Jeff explained that the year 2017 will be a better year for the town. We will have finished paying off the New Hartford Road Loan and the School Bond. Steve explained we have limited use of the loader now. It needs repairs as soon as possible. The Selectmen agreed to have a special town meeting on March 25, 2015 at 7p.m. Discussed funding for the cemetery road reclaim, loader tires and new highway dept. truck.

David Hubbard is imploring the selectmen to think about strategic planning. He feels the tax rate will shock residents. He feels it is imperative to have a plan and reform the budget. He would like a \$20,000 sinking fund which would be used to defray the bond for Wired West. Pat asked what we would gain by funding the fleet monitoring system from the special town meeting that David discussed. David would like to defer fixing or buying a new vehicle for a year. He would like to contract out the work. Dolores explained again that you would still have to pay the highway department as they have a legal binding contract that does not allow you to give their work to private contractors. David discussed the employees giving back a little to the town. Dolores asked Lisa to give the number we loose to chapter 61 programs each year, Lisa responded \$148,000. Dolores asked the finance committee if they considered asking the people that get these large tax breaks if they would consider giving a little back to the town. She asked David Hubbard if he would consider taking some of his land out of Chapter 61 and paying his full fair taxes. He responded that he would consider it if the Selectmen will create a plan to institute Wired West. Kathy J. brought up their initiative from last June and still feels there should be a committee in place. Teresa checked with other surrounding towns and they do not privatize their highway dept. They follow the same format as we do. She has a copy of Sheffield's program and it is the same as ours. The finance committee has not been in agreement with this, they feel Sheffield contracts all their work out. Patrick explained that Lisa has been following up continually about Chapter programs and

stumpage fees. David would like to have Wired West vote on at a special town meeting. Patrick explained that this is too huge of an issue for a special town meeting which has a limited forum. Patrick feels the gravity of not having it on the annual town meeting is astronomic. Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko explained the history of the annual town meeting and special town meetings. Special town meetings are for emergencies and the warrant gets posted in three places. The annual town warrant per bylaw, gets mailed to every registered voters household. Dolores as town clerk commented on how much discussion the finance committee has had regarding budgets and their recommendations. She asked when they met to have these discussions as she has not received any postings of agendas or minutes of meetings in quite a while. Kathy Jacobs responded that they have been communicating by email. Dolores explained that that was a clear violation of the open meeting law. They do not agree.

David Hubbard still wants to know what is the stand by the town to get high speed internet, he feels that the only way for this to pass is by support by the Selectmen. Patrick reviewed the finance committee suggestions; level all salaries, give work away to contractors, cut office hours to offset the increase in electricity, not fix vehicles or purchase any new vehicles. Jeff said if we acted on their initiatives it would actually cost the town more money.

We will remove the cemetery road reclaim for \$27,500 from the warrant and use millings for a temporary fix.

Discussed the loader tires. Kathy J. researched tires herself and ha suggestions on off brand tires and recap tires. Steve explained that when he used a cheaper tire for the grader they ended up with 2 flat tires. Using the cheapest product does not always work out. Lisa asked how long good tires should last, Steve responded 10 years. Kathy J. is pushing for recaps. Steve did check with vendors on recaps and they all responded that they are not as reliable. Patrick explained that Steve is also a taxpayer and is not trying to waste money or inflate the budget. Pat agreed with taking the tires from stabilization with a 5 year payback. Jeff suggested no payback. David Hubbard suggested having the school level fund. Patrick again explained that much of their budget is dictated by the state. A lengthy discussed followed on the school budget. Dolores announced that all concerned at this meeting with the school budget attend the school budget meeting this Wednesday. Jeff does not want to payback stabilization, Patrick reviewed that free cash is depleting. The new truck will be funded through stabilization with a 10 year payback. Jean and Lisa suggested creating a line item for Wired West that we could add to each year. Dolores suggested waiting until next year to see if Wired West passes before budgeting for it.

Lisa presented the Town Administrator updates. She has been working with Kathy Stevens on New Hartford Rd., continues to work on phones, Wired West/MBI, working with special town council on Athena Nursing facility, unrestricted aid, pilot money, veterans benefits, chapter 90, bond bill info.

Lisa would like permission to attend a Berkshire Managers meeting tomorrow in Great Barrington from 9am to noon, permission given by the Selectmen.

Lisa presented the Waste Ban Compliance Certification for the selectmen's signatures.

Discussed alternatives for electricity.

Mail reviewed

Warrants reviewed and signed

Minutes of meetings signed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Patrick Barrett

Jeffrey Gray